

***Offline* Reader Guide for Management Courses**

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To the Instructor

Offline provides an excellent case study of the challenges and issues managers face, especially during mergers or when they take over an existing department. Although *Offline* is a novel, a number of the scenes are based on actual experiences.

This guide provides you with discussion topics and exercises you can incorporate into your curriculum. You are free to use and customize the materials in this guide as you wish.

Before you use these exercises, I recommend that you read *Offline* yourself to become familiar with the book. Also refer to the reference material on the *Offline* Web site (www.matthewarnoldstern.com/offline) to learn more about the story and the themes in the book.

How to Use *Offline* in Your Course

1. Purchase copies of *Offline* for your students. Volume discounts for copies of *Offline* are available from the publisher (www.lulu.com/mastern) or contact your local bookseller.
2. Allow at least a week before class for your students to read the book. Although *Offline* is short (approximately 200 pages), you'll want to give your students sufficient time to reread or take notes.
3. Choose any combination of the discussion topics or exercises that follow to use in your curriculum.

Discussion Topics

1. Do you think Lucy was an effective manager? Why or why not?
2. Were Jake and Hank justified in getting CommuniLink employees to follow Synergency's standards? If so, how could they have been more effective in getting the employees to follow them?
3. At the Friday Fun Day, Khadija wouldn't wear shorts and Raghu wouldn't eat lunch because of their religious beliefs. Should managers make exceptions for employees who can't follow company policy because of religious beliefs? If so, how can they make decisions that are fair to the other employees?
4. Suppose you were Bartleby's boss. How would you have handled him?

For more information about *Offline*,
visit www.matthewarnoldstern.com/offline

5. Imagine that you are a management consultant hired by eUniLink in the aftermath of what happened in *Offline*. What should the company do now?
6. When Lucy felt her manager was being unjust, she defied him by giving all of her employees high scores in their performance reviews. Was Lucy right in doing this? If not, what should she have done instead?
7. Evaluate the communication between Lucy and Jake. Could they have communicated better? If so, how? And how could they have kept their communication from deteriorating?
8. Lucy was told by Carol Kent (her micromanaging boss), Bartleby, and Brenda that managers should not care about or get personally involved with their employees. Lucy didn't agree with them. Who was more right, Lucy or the people who cautioned her? Why?
9. Bartleby told Lucy, "Managers don't cry." Do you agree with this? Has there ever been a situation you've had as a manager that made you cry or want to cry?
10. Think about how Lucy's personal beliefs shaped her management style. Now, describe how your beliefs shape your management style.
11. Do you think companies should discourage or prohibit workplace romances? If not, how could companies mitigate their possible effects?
12. Think about the last merger you experienced or one you know about. How does it compare with what happened in *Offline*? What did management do right or wrong in both in *Offline* and your real-life experience?
13. Evaluate how Lucy established herself as the manager of her new department. What did she do right? How could she have done better?
14. How important is it for employees to be loyal to their company? What can you do to improve the loyalty of your employees?

Exercises

1. You are Hank Pauley giving the speech at the beginning of the book. Give a speech that will truly unify and motivate that company. Each person gives the speech, and the rest of the class gives feedback.
2. Suppose eUniLink hired your class to run their Friday Fun Day. Considering how divided the company was in that chapter, put together an effective and fun team building event for them. For this

exercise, divide the class in teams. Each team puts on the team building exercise it developed for the rest of the class.

3. Role play one of the following scenes from the book:
 - ❖ Lucy's first staff meeting with her department (Chapter 1, 13:58:18).
 - ❖ Lucy's first encounter with Bartleby (Chapter 1, 14:10:21).
 - ❖ Lucy's attempt to convince Bartleby to go to Friday Fun Day (Chapter 5, 11:16:15).
 - ❖ Lucy's confrontation with Bartleby over the software versioning system (Chapter 11, 08:31:18).

For the scene you choose, do the following:

1. Reenact the scene as it is written in the book.
2. Evaluate the scene. How well did Lucy handle the situation? What advice could you give to improve?
3. Role play the scene again with the recommended improvements.
4. Use the scene where Bartleby attacks Lucy when she attempts to terminate him (Chapter 12, 09:18:03) to discuss your company's policies on workplace safety. Could your company's policies have prevented the tragedy in the story? How would your company respond if there was a hostage taken or some other dangerous situation? What improvements should your company make to their safety policies?
5. Lucy's mug reflects her beliefs. Design a mug that shows your professional beliefs. Share your mug design with the group. (You can download a mug template and purchase your mug at www.cafepress.com.)

Questions

If you have questions about using *Offline* in your training course, contact me at matthew@matthewarnoldstern.com. Put READER GUIDE in your subject line.